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FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM COLOMBO DATED DECEMBER 5, 1977 SENT
USIA WASHDC, SECSTATE WASHDC INFO KABUL, KUALA LUMPUR,
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SUBJ: UNESCO EXPERTS MEETING ON ASIAN NEWS AGENCIES

REF: STATE 270068 (C)

1. UNESCO-SPONSORED FIVE-DAY SEMINAR ON DEVELOPMENT OF ASIAN
NEWS AGENCIES OPENED DEC. 5 AT COLOMBO BANDARANAIKE MEMORIAL
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HALL BY GSL MINISTER OF INFORMATION
AND BROADCASTING D.B. WIJETUNGE.

2. REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT FROM 17 COUNTRIES (AFGHANISTAN,
AUSTRALIA, BANGLADESH, INDIA, INDONESIA, IRAN, JAPAN REPUBLIC
OF KOREA, MALAYSIA, MONGOLIA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, PHILIPPINES,
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SRI LANKA, THAILAND, USSR, VIETNAM AND NEPAL), PLUS REPRESENTATIVES AND OBSERVERS FROM INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION, INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF JOURNALISTS, ALLIANCE EUROPIENNE DES AGENCES DE PRESSE, INTERNATIONAL PRESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL, POOL OF NON-ALIGNED NEWS AGENCIES, INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF COMMUNICATIONS, INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION,

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM COMITE, ASIAN MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH
AND INFORMATION CENTRE, CONFEDERATION OF ASIAN JOURNALISTS.

3. SEMINAR OFFICIALS ELECTED TODAY: CHAIRMAN, ESMOND WICK-
REMASINGHE, HEAD OF SRI LANKA DELEGATION AND CHAIRMAN OF SRI
LANKA NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION; THREE VICE CHAIRMEN -- YUSUFI,
VP BAKHTAR NEWS AGENCY/KABUL; TOSHIO HORKIWA, FOREIGN MANAGER
KYODO NEWS SERVICE/TOKYO; LE CHAN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL
AGENCE VIETNAMEENNE D'INFORMATION/HANOI; AND RAPPORTEUR
MOHAMMED SALEH DAUD, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, BERNAMA NEWS AGENCY/
KUALA LUMPUR. GSL INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER
WIJETUNGE EXPRESSED PLEASURE THAT UNESCO HAD TAKEN INTEREST
IN IMPROVING GENERALLY RECOGNIZED INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE
IN BALANCE. ASIAN COUNTRIES NOW FACE TASK, HE SAID "OF CON-
SOLIDATING (THEIR) INDEPENDENCE BY STRENGTHENING OUR ECONOMIC
AND CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS...WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF OUR PEOPLES'
DEMOCRATIC ASPIRATIONS." UNFORTUNATELY SINCE WORLD PRESS NOT
MUCH INTERESTED IN THIS THEME, "ASIAN NEWS AGENCIES CAN AND
SHOULD MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION...."

4. RECOGNIZING THAT NATIONAL MEDIA OFTEN IMITATE FOREIGN
NEWS COVERAGE PRACTICES, WIJETUNGE ADVOCATED THAT "WE MUST
PUT OUR OWN HOUSE IN ORDER FIRST...OUR NEWS AGENCIES...SHOULD
MAKE AVAILABLE MORE NEWS ABOUT THE REGION TO THEIR COUNTRIES
..." ALTHOUGH INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES SHOWED GOOD WILL, HE
EMPHASIZED THAT BECAUSE OF IMBALANCE OFTEN THEY -- AND
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WESTERN COUNTRIES -- DID NOT UNDERSTAND COMPLEXITY OF PROBLEMS
FACING DEVELOPING NATIONS. WIJETUNGE CONCLUDED BY MENTIONING
GSL PROPOSED FREE TRADE ZONE AND INDICATED THAT THIS "WOULD
NATURALLY MEAN THAT (WE HAVE) TO INVEST IN MODERN COMMUNI-
CATION TECHNOLOGY...WE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN WORK IN THIS AREA."

5. LLOYD SOMMERLAD, UNESCO REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS ADVISER
IN ASIA, CALLED MEETING PART OF UNESCO'S "LONG TERM AND CON-
SISTENT PROGRAMME." HE STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF NON-ALIGNED
MOVEMENT IN BRINGING ABOUT "HORIZONTAL NEWS EXCHANGES DIRECTLY
BETWEEN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES...LET THERE BE NO MISUNDER-
STANDING," HE SAID, "NEITHER UNESCO NOR THE POOL HAS EVER
MADE ANY SUGGESTIONS TO REPLACE THE WORLD WIRE SERVICES AS THE
BASIC SOURCE OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS...IT IS A QUESTION OF SUPPLE-
MENTING NOT SUBSTITUTING...." HE LISTED PROBLEMS OF THIRD
WORLD NEWS EXCHANGES AS TECHNICAL; FINANCIAL (ESPECIALLY
TELECOMMUNICATION TARIFF COSTS); TRAINED PERSONNEL TO OPERATE
PROFESSIONAL MEDIA SYSTEMS; AND SAID THAT DECISIONS REACHED
HERE WOULD BE CARRIED TO UNESCO-SPONSORED JUNE 1978 INTER-
GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATION POLICIES IN ASIA TO
BE HELD IN MALAYSIA.

6. TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH CONFERENCE, SRI LANKA INAUGURATED NEW NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY "LANKA PUWATH" (SRI LANKA NEWS) LAST WEEK. SEMINAR CHAIRMAN WICKREMASINGHE AND SECRETARY OF MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING SARATH AMUNUGAMA IN PRIVATE TALK WITH IO CLAIMED THAT SINCE INAUGURATION, MORE LOCAL, OUTSIDE-COLOMBO NEWS HAD BEEN OBTAINED IN 24 HOURS THAN HAD BEEN COLLECTED OVER PAST YEAR BY TRADITIONAL MEANS. SAID AMUNUGAMA: "WE'LL BE IN TOUCH WITH YOU PEOPLE FOR TECHNICAL HELP. IF YOU DON'T HELP, THE CHINESE WILL."

7. COLOMBO-BASED AGENCY RECEIVES NEWS VIA SRI LANKA BROADCASTING CORPORATION FACILITIES AT JAFFNA, KANDY, GALLE AND AMPARAI. DISTRIBUTION MADE TO NEWSPAPERS THROUGH PRESS TRUST OF CEYLON'S TELEPRINTERS FROM SLBC COLOMBO HEADQUARTERS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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